

Negation in Hungarian

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Abstract

The paper presents predicate negation and constituent negation in Hungarian, both of which are expressed by the negative particle *nem* in indicative clauses, and by *ne* in imperative, subjunctive, and optative clauses. *Se(m)* is analyzed as a minimalizing particle, which can replace the particle *ne(m)* in certain contexts. The paper discusses two word order possibilities: the standard option, with the V raised to *nem* across the verbal particle, and an archaic pattern, with *nem* intervening between the verbal particle and the verb. *Nem* merges with the 3rd person present indicative copula, yielding *nincs* ‘isn’t’. An indefinite in the scope of negation is supplied with the minimalizer *sem*. Hungarian is shown to be a strict negative concord language, where universal and existential pronouns have special negative forms, which always require the presence of the negative particle. The paper also discusses negative replies, abessive morphemes, metalinguistic negation, and the non-negative, modal uses of the negative particle.

1. The language

Hungarian is spoken by about 12.5 million speakers in the Carpathian Basin in Central Europe. It is the official language of Hungary; it is a minority language in the neighbouring countries. It is the mother tongue of nearly 10 million speakers in Hungary, 1.5 million speakers in Romania, 500.000 speakers in Slovakia, about 300.000 speakers in Serbia, 150.000 speakers in the Ukraine, and a few thousand speakers in Slovenia, Austria, and Croatia. It is dialectally fairly homogeneous. Its only dialect which significantly deviates from the standard language is the easternmost Csángó dialect spoken in the Moldva region of Romania.

Hungarian is a discourse-configurational language, with a clause-initial topic and an immediately preverbal exhaustive focus. Quantifiers are also usually preposed into the preverbal field. The verbal complements with no special discourse role or logical function follow the verb in a free order. The verb agrees with its subject and its definite object. The NP is head-final. Local and temporal relations are expressed by postpositions and a great variety of morphological cases.

2. Clausal negation¹

2.1. Standard negation

Negation is expressed by the negative particle *nem* in the unmarked case. It can appear in two positions. If *nem* negates a neutral sentence with no structural focus, it immediately precedes the verb:

- (1) a. *A kutya ugat.*
the dog bark.3SG
'The dog is barking.'
- b. *A kutya **nem** ugat.*
the dog not bark.3SG
'The dog is not barking.'

The Hungarian verb is often accompanied by a so-called verb modifier: a resultative or terminative verbal particle (2a), a bare nominal object (3a), or some other non-referential, predicative complement. In focusless affirmative sentences the verb modifier immediately precedes the verb. The neutral verb modifier – verb order is reversed in negative clauses (except for a rare, archaic pattern discussed in section 2.5.)

¹ For descriptive facts of Hungarian negation written in English, see de Groot (1994), and Kenesei, Vágó, and Fenyvesi (1997).

- (2) a. *A kutya meg-fog-t-a a nyul-at.*²
the dog PRT-catch-PST-3SG.OBJ the rabbit-ACC
‘The dog caught the rabbit.’
- b. *A kutya nem fogta meg a nyul-at.*
the dog not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the rabbit-ACC
‘The dog did not catch the rabbit.’
- (3) a. *A kutya nyul-at fog-ott.*
the dog rabbit-ACC catch-PST.3SG
‘The dog caught some rabbit(s).’
- b. *A kutya nem fogott nyul-at.*
the dog not catch-PST.3SG rabbit-ACC
‘The dog did not catch any rabbit(s).’

In constructions containing a preverbal structural focus, either the focus (4b), or the background (4c), or both (4d), can be negated:

² If the verbal particle immediately precedes the verb (as it does in (2a)), they are spelled as one word. To indicate that they are two independent syntactic units to be separated in negative and various other contexts, they will be hyphenated in this paper.

- (4) a. *A KUTYA fog-t-a meg a nyul-at.*
the dog catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the rabbit-ACC
‘It was the dog that caught the rabbit.’
- b. *Nem A KUTYA fog-t-a meg a nyul-at.*
not the dog catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the rabbit-ACC
‘It was not the dog that caught the rabbit.’
- c. *A KUTYA nem fog-t-a meg a nyul-at.*
the dog not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the rabbit-ACC
‘It was the dog that did not catch the rabbit.’
- d. *Nem a KUTYA nem fog-t-a meg a*
not the dog not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the
nyul-at.
rabbit-ACC
‘It was not the dog that did not catch the rabbit.’

In focus constructions, it is the focus constituent that elicits the reversal of the ‘verb modifier, verb’ order of neutral sentences (4a). Focus negation involves no further word order change: the negative particle immediately precedes the focus (4b). Background negation (4c) is non-distinct from clausal negation illustrated in (2b): the negative particle immediately precedes the verb.

Clausal negation is sometimes expressed by *sem*. *Sem*, deriving from *es nem* ‘also not’, is the negative polarity equivalent of the additive/emphatic particle *is* ‘also, even’ (5a-c). *Sem* also obligatorily accompanies indefinites in the scope of negation (6a-b), in which case it functions as a minimizing particle, roughly meaning ‘at all’. When *sem* appears in an immediately preverbal (5b, 6b) or prefocus (5c) position, the negative particle licensing it is not spelled out (or, putting it differently, it merges into *sem*), as a consequence of which *sem* is interpreted as the negative particle.

- (5) a. *A nyul-at nem fog-t-a meg a kutya*
the rabbit-ACC not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the dog
sem.
either
‘Neither did the dog catch the rabbit.’
- b. *A nyul-at a kutya sem fog-t-a meg.*
the rabbit-ACC the dog either catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT
‘Neither did the dog catch the rabbit.’
- c. *A kutya sem A NYUL-AT fog-t-a*
the dog either the rabbit-ACC catch-PST-3SG.OBJ
meg.
PRT
‘Neither did the dog catch the rabbit.’

- (6) a. *A kutya **nem** fog-ott egy nyul-at **sem**.*
 the dog not catch-PST.3SG a rabbit-ACC at.all
 ‘The dog did not catch any rabbit.’
- b. *A kutya egy nyul-at **sem** fog-ott.*
 the dog a rabbit-ACC at.all catch-PST.3SG
 ‘The dog did not catch any rabbit.’

In view of the facts surveyed, Hungarian negation counts as partly symmetric, partly asymmetric in the typology of Miestamo (2005): the negation of neutral sentences containing no verb modifier, and the negation of focus constructions is symmetric, causing no restructuring of the sentence, whereas the negation of neutral sentences containing a verbal particle (the majority pattern, including all telic/perfective sentences, among others) is asymmetric, eliciting V-movement across the verb modifier. (In fact, negation may elicit V-movement in all neutral sentences; however, V-movement is invisible if no verb modifier intervenes between the source and the target positions of the verb.)

2.2. Negation in non-declaratives

In imperative sentences like (7a) and optative sentences like (8a), negation is expressed by the negative particle *ne*. *Ne* occupies the same preverbal and/or prefocus position that *nem* occupies in indicative clauses.

- (7) a. Enged-d be a kutyá-t!
 let-IMP.2SG.OBJ in the dog-ACC
 ‘Let in the dog!’
- b. *Ne* enged-d be a kutyá-t!
 not let-IMP.2SG.OBJ in the dog-ACC
 ‘Don’t let in the dog!’
- c. *Ne* A KUTYÁ-T enged-d be!
 not the dog-ACC let-IMP.2SG.OBJ in
 ‘It is not the dog that you should let in!’
- d. *Ne* A KUTYÁ-T *ne* enged-d be!
 not the dog-ACC NOT let-IMP.2SG.OBJ in
 ‘It is not the dog that you should not let in!’
- (8) a. *Bárcsak* *el* vesz-ett vol-na a kutya!
 if.only PRT lost-PST.3SG be-COND the dog
 ‘If only the dog had got lost!’
- b. *Bárcsak* *ne* vesz-ett vol-na *el* a kutya!
 if.only not lost-PST.3SG be-COND PRT the dog

‘If only the dog had not got lost!’

In the conditions when *nem*, the negative particle of indicative clauses, is replaced by *sem* (see the discussion of (5) and (6)), *ne*, the negative particle of imperative and optative clauses, is replaced by *se* (see 9b, 10b).

- (9) a. *Ne enged-d be a kutyát sem!*
not let-IMP.2SG.OBJ in the dog-ACC either
‘Don’t let in the dog, either!’
- b. *A kutyá-t se enged-d be!*
the dog-ACC either let-IMP.2SG.OBJ in
‘Don’t let in the dog, either!’

- (10) a. *Ne enged-j be egy kutyá-t sem!*
not let-IMP.2SG in a dog-ACC at.all
‘Don’t let in any dog!’
- b. *Egy kutyát se enged-j be!*
one dog-ACC not let-IMP.2SG in
‘Don’t let in any dog!’

The negative particle *ne* of imperative and optative main clauses and subjunctive subordinate clauses can merge with the complementizer *hogy*

‘that’. The resulting *nehogy* does not elicit the reversal of the verbal particle and the verb.

- (11) a. *Nehogy be-enged-d a kutyá-t!*
 not.that in-let-IMP.2SG the dog-ACC
 ‘Don’t let in the dog!’
- b. *Csak nehogy baj len-ne / legy-en!*
 only not.that trouble be-COND.3SG / be-SUBJ.3SG
 ‘If only there would not/should not be any trouble!’

In subordinate subjunctive clauses, there is some uncertainty whether *nehogy* ‘not that’ is a negative complementizer or just a negative particle. The complementizer *hogy* can be spelled out twice in such sentences, as shown in (12b,c), which argues for the negative particle status of *nehogy*:

- (12) a. *Vigyáz-z, nehogy be-jöj-jön a kutya.*
 take.care-IMP.2SG not.that in-come-SUBJ.3SG the dog
 ‘Take care so that the dog should not come in.’
- b. *Vigyáz-z, hogy nehogy be-jöj-jön*
 take.care-IMP.2SG that not.that in-come-SUBJ.3SG
a kutya.
 the dog

‘Take care so that the dog should not come in.’

c. *Vigyázz-z, hogy a kutya nehogy*

take.care-IMP.2SG that that dog not.that

be-jöj-jön.

in-come-SUBJ.3SG

‘Take care so that the dog should not come in.’

On the other hand, *nehogy* – as opposed to *ne* – does not license a negative polarity pronoun (cf. Section 3.2.):

(13) a. **Semmi-t nehogy egy-él!*

nothing-ACC not.that eat-IMP.2SG

(cf. *Semmi-t ne egy-él!*)

nothing-ACC not eat-IMP.2SG

‘Do not eat anything!’

b. **Nehogy egyé-l semmit!*

not.that eat-IMP.2SG nothing-ACC

c. *Nehogy egy-él valami-t!*

not.that eat-IMP.2SG something-ACC

‘Do not eat anything!’

2.3. Negation in non-verbal clauses

Hungarian nominal and adjectival predicates with a 3rd person subject are negated with the particle *nem* left-adjacent to the predicate:

(14) a. *János tanár / okos.*

John teacher / smart

‘John is a teacher/John is smart.’

b. *János **nem** tanár / **nem** okos.*

John not teacher / nem smart

‘John is not a teacher/John is not smart.’

If the subject is other than 3rd person, and/or if the tense and mood are other than present tense indicative, the copula has to be spelled out. The nominal/adjectival predicate immediately precedes the copula (15a, 16a). This construction is non-distinct from a neutral sentence containing a verbal modifier represented by a bare nominal complement, e.g. that in (3a). In the case of negation, the nominal predicate + copula order is reversed (15b, 16b):

(15) a. *Én tanár vagy-ok.*

I teacher be-1SG

‘I am a teacher.’

(16) a. *János beteg volt-t.*

John ill be-PST.3SG

‘John was ill.’

b. *Én **nem** vagy-ok tanár.*

I not be-1SG teacher

‘I am not a teacher.’

b. *János **nem** volt beteg.*

John not be-PST.3SG ill

‘John was not ill.’

In locative, possessive, and existential sentences, the copula has to be spelled out also in 3rd person present tense indicative (17a, 18a, 19a). The 3rd person present tense indicative copula has a special negative form: *nincs* ‘isn’t’, *nincsenek* ‘aren’t’, as shown in (17b, 19b) and (19b). The negative copula occupies the pre-verb-modifier position of negated verbs. (In possessive sentences, the possessum, bearing a possessedness suffix, is not a bare nominal acting as a verb modifier; hence its position is not affected by negation.)

(17) a. *János otthon van*

John at.home be.3SG

‘John is at home.’

b. *János **nincs** otthon.*

John not.be.3SG at.home

‘John is not at home.’

(18) a. *János-nak van-nak kutya-i.*

John-DAT be-3PL dog-3SG.PL

‘John has dogs.’

b. *János-nak nincs-enek kutya-i.*

John- DAT not.be-3PL dog-3SG.PL

‘John does not have dogs.’

(19) a. *Vannak vendégek.*

be-3PL guests

‘There are guests.’

b. *Nincsenek vendégek.*

not.be-3PL guests

‘There are no guests.’

Under the conditions when *nem* is replaced by *sem* and *ne* is replaced by *se* (cf. the discussion of (5-6)), *nincs* is also replaced by *sincs*:

(20) a. *Nincs otthon János sem.*

not.be.3SG at.home John either

‘John is not at home, either.’

b. *János sincs otthon.*

John not.be.3SG at.hom

‘John is not at home, either.’

2.4. Negation in dependent/subordinate clauses

Dependent indicative declarative clauses are negated with the regular *nem* particle. In subjunctive clauses, expressing an unreal eventuality, selected by verbs or nominal predicates denoting wish, emotion, possibility, judgment, opinion, necessity, or future action, *nem* is replaced by *ne*, the negative particle also used in imperative and optative sentences. E.g.:

- (21) *Fontos, hogy a kutya ne jöj-jön be.*
important that the dog not come-SUBJ.3SG in
'It is important that the dog should not come in.'

In non-finite negative clauses, i.e., in negated infinitival and participial phrases, the neutral 'verbal particle, verb' order can, but need not, be reversed. Cf.

- (22) a. *Fontos vol-na nem felejt-eni el a*
important be-COND.3SG not forget-INF PRT the
jelszó-t.
password-ACC
'It would be important not to forget the password.'
- b. *Fontos volna nem el-felejt-eni a*

important be-COND.3SG not PRT-forget-INF the
jelszót.

password-ACC

‘It would be important not to forget the password.’

(23) a. *János el-men-t, nem csuk-va be az*

John PRT-go-PST.3SG not close-ADV PRT the
ajtó-t maga után.

door-ACC himself behind

‘John left, not closing the door behind himself.’

b. *János el-men-t, nem be-csuk-va az*

John PRT-go-PST.3SG not PRT-close-ADV the
ajtó-t maga után.

door-ACC himself behind

‘John left, not closing the door behind himself.’

2.5. Other clausal negation constructions

An alternative pattern of negation, gradually disappearing from the language, is still allowed in a number of contexts. In this construction, the verbal particle precedes (rather than follows) the negated verb. It is the preferred option in a single clause type: temporal clauses introduced by

amíg ‘until’ (24). In subjunctive clauses (25a), conditional clauses (25b), and non-finite clauses (25c,d), it occurs as an alternative of the regular pattern discussed in Section 2.1.

(24) *Vár-ok, amíg János vissza nem jön.*

wait-1SG until John back not come.3SG

‘I will wait until John comes back.’

(25) a. *Fontos, hogy a kutya be ne jöj-jön.*

important that the dog in not come-SUBJ.3SG

‘It is important that the dog should not come in.’

b. *Megharagsz-om, ha be nem jös-sz.*

get.angry-1SG if in not come-2SG

‘I get angry unless you come in.’

c. *egy el nem olvas-ott könyv*

a PRT not read-PTCP.PST book

‘a book not read’

d. *egy soha el nem készül-ő dolgozat*

a never PRT not prepare-PTCP.PRS paper

‘a paper never getting prepared’

In main clauses, the marked verbal particle – negative particle – verb order has a special emotive value, and, accordingly, it mainly occurs in exclamative, imperative and optative sentences – see (26a-c). It is also licensed in coordinate clauses introduced by *se(m)...se(m)* ‘neither...nor’ – see (27).

(26) a. ***Meg sem szólal-t!***

PRT not say.a.word-PST.3SG

‘He did not even say a word!’

b. ***Be ne gyere!***

in not come.IMP.2SG

‘Don’t come in!’

c. ***Bárcsak el ne men-t vol-na!***

if.only away not go-PST.3SG be-COND

‘If only he had not left!’

(27) ***János se meg nem látogat-t-a Pétert, se***

John neither PRT not visit-PST-3SG.OBJ Peter-ACC nor

fel nem hív-t-a.

PRT not call-PST-3SG.OBJ

‘John neither visited Peter, nor called him up.’

3. Non-clausal negation

3.1. Negative replies

The short negative answer to a positive *yes-no* question is *Nem* 'No', with the verb and the verb modifier added optionally:

- (28) *A* *kutya* *meg-fog-t-a* *a* *nyul-at?*
the dog PRT-catch-PST-3SG.OBJ the rabbit-ACC
'Did the dog catch the rabbit?'
- Nem.* (*Nem fog-t-a* *meg.*)
not not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT
'No. (It did not catch it.)'

In the case of a negative *yes-no* question, the answer *Nem* 'No' means agreement with the negative truth value of the questioned proposition:

- (29) *A* *kutya* ***nem*** *fog-t-a* *meg a* *nyul-at?*
the dog not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the rabbit-ACC
'Did the dog not catch the rabbit?'
- Nem.* (*Nem fog-t-a* *meg.*)

not not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT

'No. (It did not catch it.)'

Affirmative answers to negative questions consist in *De igen* 'But yes', with the verb modifier and the verb added optionally.

- (30) *A kutya nem fog-t-a meg a nyul-at?*
the dog not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the rabbit-ACC
'Did not the dog catch the rabbit?'
De igen. (Meg-fogta.)
but yes (PRT-catch-PST-3SG.OBJ)
'Yes. (It did.)'

3.2. Negative indefinites and quantifiers

Hungarian is a negative concord language, i.e., negative indefinite and negative universal pronouns co-occur with a separate expression of sentential negation (cf. Haspelmath 2004). Hungarian indefinite pronouns (*valaki* 'somebody', *valahol* 'somewhere', etc.) in the scope of negation, and universal pronouns (*mindenki* 'everybody', *mindenhhol* 'everywhere', etc.) with scope over negation have identical negative polarity equivalents, composed of *sem/se* and the root morpheme of indefinite and universal

pronouns, functioning as interrogative pronouns in themselves. Compare the set of interrogative, indefinite, universal, and negative pronouns as in (31):

(31) *Hungarian pronouns*

Interrogatives	Indefinites	Universals	Negatives
<i>ki</i> 'who'	<i>valaki</i> 'somebody'	<i>mindenki</i> 'everybody'	<i>senki</i> 'nobody'
<i>mi</i> 'what'	<i>valami</i>	<i>minden</i>	<i>semmi</i>
<i>hol</i> 'where'	<i>valahol</i>	<i>mindenhol</i>	<i>sehol</i>
<i>mikor</i> 'when'	<i>valamikor</i>	<i>mindenkor</i>	<i>semmikor</i>
<i>hány</i> 'how many'	<i>valahány</i>	<i>mindahány</i>	<i>sehány</i> etc.

In many contexts, the negative pronouns, also referred to as *se*-pronouns, are ambiguous between a negative polarity existential reading ('it is not the case that anybody did...') and a negative polarity universal reading ('everybody did not...'). The two meanings are logically equivalent; however, the former is [-specific], whereas the latter is [+specific], denoting every member of a contextually determined set. In some cases the selectional restriction of the verb or the structural position of the pronoun only allows one of the two readings. E.g., when *senki* represents the subject of a verb expressing appearance or coming into being, requiring a nonspecific indefinite subject, it is an existential in the scope of negation:

(32) *Nem érkezett senki.*

not arrive-PST.3SG nobody

‘Nobody arrived. [It is not the case that anybody arrived].’

When the *se*-pronoun occupies the canonical post-topic, pre-focus position of universal quantifiers, it only has the [+specific] universal meaning:

(33) *Senki nem A DÉLI VONAT-TAL érkezett.*

nobody not the noon train-INSTR arrive-PST.3SG

‘Nobody arrived with the TRAIN AT NOON. [For everybody, it as not the train at noon by which (s)he arrived].’

As illustrated by (32) and (33), a *se*-pronoun can be licensed by either a predicate-negating *nem* or a focus-negating *nem*. It can optionally be followed by the minimizer *sem*. When *sem* immediately precedes the negated verb or the negated focus, the negative particle is not spelled out; it can be assumed to be merged into *sem* – as was discussed in connection with (5-6), (9-10), and (20). Thus (32) and (33) also have the versions in (34) and (35):

(34) a. *Nem érkezett senki sem.*

not arrive-PST.3SG nobody at.all

‘Nobody arrived.’

b. *SENKI sem érkez-ett.*

nobody at.all arrive-PST.3SG

‘Nobody arrived.’

(35) a. *Nem a DÉLI VONAT-TAI érkez-ett senki*

not the noon train-INSTR arrive-PST.3SG nobody

sem

at.all

‘Nobody arrived with the TRAIN AT NOON. [For everybody, it was not the train at noon by which (s)he arrived].’

b. *Senki sem A DÉLI VONATTAL érkez-ett.*

nobody at.all that noon train-INSTR arrive-PST.3SG

‘Nobody arrived with the TRAIN AT NOON.’

A bare indefinite, e.g. that in (3a), can be interpreted as a verb modifier or as a focus. In the former case, it is negated via clausal negation, with the word order negative particle – verb – NP_{verb modifier} (36a). If a focussed indefinite is negated, the word order is negative particle – NP_{focus} – V (36b).

(36) a. *A kutya nem fog-ott nyul-at.*

the dog not catch-PST.3SG rabbit-ACC

‘The dog did not catch any rabbit.’

b. *A kutya nem NYUL-AT fog-ott.*

the dog not rabbit-ACC catch-PST.3SG

‘It was not a rabbit that the dog caught.’

Non-specific indefinites containing an indefinite article, e.g., that in (37a), must be supplied with the minimizer *sem/se* in the scope of negation – see (37b). If no minimizer were added to *egy nyulat* ‘a rabbit-ACC’ in (37b), it would mean ‘a certain rabbit’. Non-specific indefinites in the scope of negation appear either among the constituents following the negated verb (37b), or they are preposed into the focus position immediately preceding the verb (37c). In the latter case, *nem* is not spelled out, and *sem* is interpreted as the carrier of negation.

(37) a. *A kutya fog-ott egy nyul-at.*

the dog catch-PST.3SG a rabbit-ACC

‘The dog caught a.’

b. *A kutya nem fog-ott egy nyul-at sem.*

the dog not catch-PST.3SG a rabbit-ACC at.all

‘The dog did not catch any rabbit.’

c. *A kutya EGY NYUL-AT SEM fog-ott.*

the dog a rabbit-ACC at.all catch-PST.3SG

‘The dog did not catch any rabbit.’

3.3. Abessive/caritive/privative negation

The Hungarian postposition corresponding to *without* is *nélkül* (38a). A *nélkül* PP can be adjectivalized by means of the suffix *-i* (38b). Denominal negative adjectives are derived by the suffix *-talan/telen*, *-atlan/etlen* (39), and verbal negative adjectives are derived by the suffix *-atlan/etlen* and *-hatatlan/hetetlen* (40) (for details, see Kiefer 2001 and in this volume).

(38) a. *János pénz nélkül érkez-ett.*

John money without arrive-PST.3SG

‘John arrived without money.’

b. *egy pénz nélkül-i diák*

a money without-ADJ student

‘a moneyless student’

(39) *pénz-telen, állás-talan diák*

money-less, job-less student

‘a moneyless and jobless student’

(40) a. *kér-etlen segítség, olvas-atlan könyv*

solicite-NEG help read-NEG book

‘unsolicited help, unread book’

b. *e-het-etlen étel, olvas-hat-atlan cikk*

eat-POSS-NEG food read-POSS-NEG article

‘inedible food, unreadable article’

4. Other aspects of negation

4.1. The scope of negation

Negation enters into scope interaction with other scope bearing elements. As was shown in (4), it can have scope over the exhaustive identification expressed by the focus – see (4b), and it can be in the scope of focus – see (4c). The interaction of the scope negation with the interpretation and the form of indefinite noun phrases was discussed in connection with (37b) (recall that indefinite noun phrases in the scope of negation are supplied with the minimizer *sem*, and they have a non-specific reading).

As discussed in Section 3.2., a negative pronoun, e.g., *senki*, is ambiguous: it can function either as the negative polarity equivalent of the indefinite *valaki* ‘somebody’, or as the negative polarity equivalent of the universal *mindenki* ‘everybody’. When functioning as a negative indefinite,

it is in the scope of negation, and it is in the scope of focus, as well, if the sentence contains one, see (41):

- (41) *TAVALLY **nem** felvételiz-ett **senki***
 last.year not take.entrance.exam-PST.3SG nobody
nyelvészet-ből.
 linguistics-EL
 'It was last year that nobody took an entrance exam in linguistics.
 [It was last year that there wasn't anybody who took an entrance
 exam in linguistics.]'

A *se*-pronoun functioning as a universal, on the other hand, takes immediate scope over negation (i.e., *senki nem...* means 'everybody was such that (s)he did not...'). If negation is subsumed by a focus, the scope order will be focus > universal > negation. The fact that the negative quantifier is in the scope focus is indicated by its destressing. Thus *senki* is destressed in (42) under the intended interpretation:

- (42) *A MÁSODIK ÉVFOLYAM-ON **nem** buk-ott*
 the second class-SUPRESS not faile-PST.3SG
*meg **senki** nyelvészet-ből.*
 PRT nobody linguistics-EL

‘It was in the second-year class that nobody failed in linguistics. [It was in the second-year class that everybody was such that (s)he did not fail in linguistics.]’

If the negative particle negates the focus, the scope order will be: universal > negation > focus, see (43):

- (43) *Senki-t nem A PROFESSZOR buktatott*
 nobody-ACC not the professor faile-PST.3SG
meg nyelvészet-ből.
 PRT linguistics-EL

‘Nobody was failed in linguistics by the PROFESSOR.

[For everybody, it was not the professor who failed him/her in linguistics].’

4.2. Negative polarity

The strong negative polarity items licensed by a clause-mate negative particle are the *se*-pronouns illustrated in (34)-(43). The weak negative polarity items licensed by a negative element in a superordinate clause, e.g., a negative particle, the postposition *anélkül*, ‘without’, or the matrix verb *tagad* ‘deny’ are presented in (44a-c). Weak negative polarity items also

occur in other types of nonveridical/unreal clauses, e.g., in questions and certain modal contexts, but they are not allowed in veridical sentences – cf. Tóth (1999).

- (44) a. *János el-ment anélkül, hogy bármi-t is*
 John PRT-go-PST.3SG it.without that anything-ACC PRT
/ akárm-t is /valami-t is mond-ott
/ anything-ACC PRT /anything-ACC PRT say-PST.3SG
vol-na.
 be-COND.3SG

‘John left without saying anything.’

- b. *Nem igaz, hogy bármi-t is / akárm-t is*
 not true that anything-ACC PRT/ anything-ACC PRT
/ valami-t is mond-ott.
/ anything-ACC PRT say-PST.3SG

‘It is not true that he said anything.’

- c. *Tagad-t-a, hogy bármi-t is / akárm-t*
 deny-PST-3SG.OBJ that anything-ACC PRT/ anything-ACC
is / valami-t is lát-ott vol-na.
 PRT / anything-ACC PRT see-PST.SG be-COND.3SG

‘He denied that he had seen anything.’

cf.

(45) **János bármi-t is /akármi-t is /valami-t*

John anything-ACC PRT/anything-ACC PRT/anything-ACC

is lát-ott.

PRT see-PST.3SG

‘John saw anything.’

4.3. Case marking under negation

Negation does not alter case marking.

4.4. Reinforcing negation

Indefinite noun phrases in the scope of negation are obligatorily supplied with the minimizer *sem*, which also has a reinforcing role, in addition to its scope marking function (recall examples 5-6, 9-10, 20, 37). *Sem* can optionally be added to negative pronouns, as well, in which case it only serves as a reinforcer (see 34-35). *Nem* can also be reinforced by the modifier *egyáltalán*, e.g.:

(46) a. *János egyáltalán nem vol-t fáradt.*

John at.all not be-PST.3SG tired

‘John was not at all tired.’

- b. *Egyáltalán nem JÁNOS volt a hibás.*
 at.all not John be-PST.3SG the faulty
 'It was not at all John who was to blame.'

4.5. Negation in complex sentences

Two negative clauses can be coordinated by the particles *se(m)...**se(m)...* 'neither..., nor...'. *Se(m)...* *se(m)...* coordinates either comments of focus constructions (47a) or comments of neutral sentences (47b). (An alternative word order of the latter construction is shown in (23d).) The topic, if there is one, precedes *sem* (47a,b). In topicless sentences, *sem* is clause-initial (47c).

- (47) a. *János se(m) PÉTER-T nem ismer-i,*
 John neither Peter-ACC not know-3SG.OBJ
se(m) MARI-VAL nem találkoz-ott még.
 nor Mary-COM not meet-PST.3SG yet
 'John neither knows Peter, nor has met Mary yet.'
- b. *János se(m) nem látogat-t-a meg Péter-t,*
 John neither not visit-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT Peter-ACC
se(m) nem hív-t-a fel.
 nor not call-pst-3SG.OBJ up
 'John neither visited Peter, nor called him up.'

- c. *Se(m) nem esik, se(m) nem fúj a szél.*
 neither not rain.3SG nor not blow.3SG the wind
 'Neither is it raining, nor is the wind blowing.'

A negative and a positive sentence can be conjoined by the conjunctions *de* or *hanem*, see (48):

- (48) a. *János nem beszél németül, de tud orosz-ul.*
 John not speak.3SG German but know.3SG Russian-ESS
 'John does not speak German but he knows Russian.'
- b. *János nem NÉMET-ÜL beszél, hanem OROSZ-UL.*
 John not German-ESS speak.3SG but Russian-ESS
 'It is not German that John speaks but Russian.'
- c. *Nem JÁNOS beszél német-ül, hanem PÉTER.*
 not John speak.3SG German-ESS but Peter
 'It is not John that speaks German but Peter.'

The conjunctions *de* and *hanem* are not synonymous. *De* is used when the negative and positive statements to be conjoined can be simultaneously true. The negative and the positive conjuncts can follow in either order.

- (49) a. *A kutya meg-fog-t-a a nyula-t, de*
the dog PRT-catch-PST-3SG.OBJ the rabbit-ACC but
nem et-t-e meg.
not ate-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT
‘The dog caught the rabbit but did not eat it.’
- b. *A kutya nem fog-t-a meg a nyula-t,*
the dog not catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT the rabbit-ACC
de meg-kerget-t-e.
but PRT-chased- PST-3SG.OBJ
‘The dog did not catch the rabbit but chased it.’

A negative and a positive statement conjoined by *hanem*, on the other hand, are alternatives; the truth of one excludes the truth of the other. *Hanem* presupposes the presence of a negative particle in the first conjunct; *hanem* introduces the second, positive conjunct. *Hanem* is particularly common in the case of contrasted foci.

- (50) *A kutya nem A NYUL-AT fog-t-a meg,*
the dog not the rabbit-ACC catch-PST-3SG.OBJ PRT
hanem A KACSA-T.
but the duck-ACC
‘It was not the rabbit that the dog caught but it was the duck.’

4.6. Metalinguistic negation

Metalinguistic negation, i.e., the negation of a linguistic utterance – as opposed to the truth-functional negation of a proposition, is expressed in Hungarian by the regular negative particle *nem*; however, the metalinguistic *nem* does not elicit the reversal of the verbal particle and the verb, and does not licence a *se*-pronoun in its scope (51b). The negated utterance and the utterance regarded as correct are often coordinated by the contrastive conjunction *hanem*.

- (51) a. *János nem össze-szid-t-a a gyerek-ek-et, hanem*

John not PRT-scold-PST-3SG.OBJ the child-PL-ACC but

nevel-t-e űk-et

educate- PST-3SG.OBJ they-ACC

‘John did not scold the children; he educated them.’

- b. **János nem össze-szid-ott sehány gyerek-et, hanem*

John not PRT-scold- PST.3SG any child-ACC but

nevel-t-e űk-et.

educate- PST-3SG.OBJ they-ACC

‘John did not scold any children; he educated them.’

4.7. Non-negative uses of negators

The particle *sem* can appear in some rare, archaic comparative constructions as part of the complex complementizer introducing the comparative clause. In common, everyday language their *sem* element is absent. This optional *sem* is not a truthfunctional negative operator; it denotes the irreality of the content of the subordinate clause.

- (52) a. *János okos-abb an-nál, semhogy*
John smart-COMP it-ADESS not.that
ez-t elhiggye.
this-ACC believe.SUBJ.3SG
'John is smarter than believing this.'
- b. *János inkább akadályoz-t-a, semmint*
John rather block-PST-3SG.OBJ not.than
támogat-t-a a terv-et.
support- PST-3SG.OBJ the plan-ACC
'John blocked rather than supported the plan.'
- c. *János okos-abb, mintsem gondol-ná-d.*
John smart-COMP than.not think-COND-2SG.OBJ
'John is smarter than you would think.'

5. Conclusion

Summarizing the most fundamental facts about negation in Hungarian: it is expressed by the negative particle *nem*. (This particle is cognate with the existential pronoun *némi* ‘some’ (meaning ‘something’ in Old Hungarian), i.e., the present-day Hungarian negative particle is the result of a Jespersenian negative cycle, where a reinforcing indefinite pronoun has ousted the original negator – see Gugán 2013). *Nem* can negate either the predicate, or the focussed constituent, and focus negation and predicate negation can cooccur in the same clause. In the case of predicate negation, *nem* attracts the verb across the verbal particle, and in the case of focus/constituent negation, it precedes the focus. In imperative and optative clauses, a special form of the negative particle (*ne*) is used.

Hungarian is a strict negative concord language; indefinite pronouns in the scope of negation, and universal pronouns with scope over negation appear in a negative form, and require the presence of the negative particle. This property of Hungarian, involving questions such as the scope of negative pronouns, their indefinite vs. universal interpretation, the carrier of negative force, has received much attention – see Tóth (1999), Puskás (2000, 2002), É. Kiss (2002, 2009), Olsvay (2006), and Surányi (2006a,b).

The negative particle also occurs in complementizer domain in certain fossilized syntactic structures, and it also has some non-negative, modal uses. Megalinguistic negation in Hungarian involves a negative particle without attracting the verb. Abessive can be expressed by a postposition and by a denominal adjectivalizing suffix.

List of abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ACC	accusative
ADESS	adessive
ADJ	adjective
ADV	verbal adverb
COMP	comparative
COND	conditional
DAT	dative
EL	elative
ESS	essive-formative

IMP	imperative
INF	infinitive
INSTR	instrumental
NEG	negative/negation
OBJ	objective conjugation
PL	plural
POSS	possessed
PRT	verbal particle
PST	past tense
PTCP	participle
SG	singular
SUBJ	subjunctive
SUPES	superessive

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Table 1. Negative strategies in Hungarian

Main negation strategies	
clausal negation	<i>nem</i> + predicate
existential, locative and possessive constr.	<i>nem</i> + copula
existential, locative and possessive constr. in present indicative 3rd person singular, plural	<i>nincs, nincsenek</i>
negation in imperative, subjunctive, and optative clauses	<i>ne</i>
constituent negation	<i>nem/ne</i> + focus
Minor clausal negation strategies	
clausal negation (2)	<i>sem/se</i> + predicate
	<i>sem/se</i> + focus
Indefinite and universal pronouns	strict negative concord
Caritive form of nouns	
'N-less', 'without N'	N- <i>atlan/-etlen, N nélkül</i>